

Finance Committee Minutes

March 19th 2012

The Finance Committee members joined the selectmen at a meeting so that the selectmen could share the salary increases approved by the selectmen with the members of the Finance Committee. Present were the selectmen, Ms. Tara White, Mr. Lawrence Davis, Mr. Nat Yohalem, the members of the Finance Committee included Mr. David Herrick acting chairman, Mr. Ira Yohalem, Mr. Burt Imberman Mr. Bill Hattendorf, and Mrs. Prudence Spaulding. Guests were Mr. Michael Skorput, Mr. Peter Marks, Mrs. Marks, and Mr. Peter Scala.

The Finance Committee members were given a new spread sheet with the increased salaries included.

The Select Board stated that everyone got a raise and went over some of the salary increases explaining their rationale in granting these increases. There was a general 2.5% raise for most employees with a few exceptions. This 2.5 % increase half of which would reflect merit and the other half was to reflect the "cost of living". Mr. Yohalem added that Mr. Skorput had been discussing raises with the staff and gathering information about their jobs, and helping the staff to set goals and objectives for the coming year. Thus this year was a "Transitional" year incorporating Merit into the raise picture.

Some of the items included on the spread sheet had not been approved by the Finance Committee and some of the items approved by the Finance Committee were not approved by the Select Board. Thus the following discussion took place.

It was noted that there was no budget statement including the quarterly tax bill expense, and that needs to be included in the general budget. Also the Fire truck and the new highway truck will affect next year's tax rate, but will be put outside 2 ½ !

The Select board stated that though the Finance Committee has approved the request for \$1000 by Berkshire South, they had felt that, though this agency is a truly valuable and worthy agency, if the town donated to it, there would be other agencies requesting funds and by giving to this agency it would set a precedent that might prove difficult in the future. Mr. Imberman stated that he thought that the town should give the requested \$1000 and deal with the other requests in the future if needed. Mr. Ira Yohalem stated that it the town should find out if other towns were donating to this agency before withdrawing the possibility of the funds being given to Berkshire South. Mr. Skorput was asked to find out the answer to this question. At the same time Mrs. Spaulding asked if the item would stay on the town warrant with the recommendation of the Finance Committee and without the recommendation of the Select Board, and Ms. White stated that was how the item would be listed on the Town warrant!

The Police Salaries were discussed, Mr. Farrell proposes to increase the police man Graham to a 40 hour week with a raise from \$19.50 per hour to \$20.50 per hour thus yielding this officer about \$43,160 per year. This salary would be competitive with other police salaries in the area. There are two part time officers that cover the sixth and seventh days of the week covering 16 hour, and their hourly rate may stay at \$16.50 an hour and \$16.75 an hour. There is some overtime included because sometimes with the nature of police work some unplanned overtime is needed.

Under Veteran's Benefits though the state reimburses the town 75% of the costs, it takes sometimes up to 3 years to get the money back from the state, so the Select Board decided to establish a fund to cover this situation.

The Libraries Salaries reflect a 9.78% increase. The Library Trustees have stated their concern that the librarian (who does a fantastic job) receives a salary which is far below other comparable librarians in the area. There are two components in the librarian's job, one the effective running of the library program and secondly the maintenance of the library. These components are now merged into one job and the librarian's salary will be raised to ~~\$41,632.~~ ^{\$39,000}

The Administrative Assistant will receive a 4.62% increase reflecting the added responsibilities he will be expected to take on. And the Highway Superintendent will receive a 3.16% increase reflecting on his excellent service.

The Emergency Management Salary which was requested for \$4000 was cut to \$3,000. The Emergency Management director will be expected to provide hourly vouchers for this salary. It was made to cover eventualities, such as Hurricane Irene, which all hope will not occur again. The Director included some postage and printing funds in her emergency Expense budget as she is considering a mailing to help establish a list of residents who might need help in a similar emergency. Mr. Herrick who is the 911 director stated that the 911 service has a list of people who felt comfortable in being listed in such a category.

Ms. White stated that there was to be a *foremen's position* established in the Highway Department and that man will receive an increase from \$17.84 to \$18.56 per hour which would exceed the 2 ½ % raise but his job would have added responsibilities.

Mr. Yohalem stated that as a result of the Town Administrators Committee's report the Select board had decided that the Administrative Assistant job will include grant writing and supervision of grant writers. His job will concentrate on budgets, bids for items, employee relations (i.e. supervision). He will be given the power and authority to stand in for the Select Board and to run the Town Hall. He will be responsible for time records, and those records under departmental heads. He will be expected to have the employees establish goals for their improvement for the coming year. He will evaluate both elected and appointed staff. Because with time the expectations of the state have become far more complex he will require help to perform some of these functions. So the Select Board has decided to appoint an assistant for 19 hours per week, this person will learn the job, as well as provide the necessary help and will be able to step in to cover when the Administrative Assistant is absent. The clerk now doing this job

will have 10 hours cut from her position so that she can perform the Town Clerks activities. The result is expected to cost the town about \$15,000 extra per year.

The Administrative Assistant will have control and authority and responsibility over all the department heads. The changes in the job descriptions will have to be made. The department heads will evaluate their staff and work in close cooperation with the Administrative Assistant. The assistant to the Administrative Assistant will be expected to work from 9-1 four days a week and from 9-12 one day a week. From all information it appears that much of the Administrative Assistant's work takes place during the mornings.

Prior to closing the meeting the Select Board asked if the Finance Committee expected to hold a public meeting to allow the town's people to learn about the budget. Mr. Herrick stated that this would be discussed at the next Finance Committee meeting expected to take place on Thursday March 22nd at 7:00PM.

The Select Board adjourned their meeting at 8:15PM.

Respectfully recorded,

Prudence Spaulding Secretary.